

# Food Policy for Food Justice: Animal Rights

# 11

2019



*"A measure of a society can be how well its people treat its animals." Mahatmas Ghandi*

Among the many unethical practices that comprise the current industrial food system, the brutalization of livestock animals is an ever present atrocity. During our trips to the supermarket, we rarely consider the price animals pay so

that the food industry can profit. This is not a judgment on the grocery-buying public. The industry has manipulated our spending habits with messaging that convinces us that not only are the cows happy, but eating fast-foods, junk foods and convenience foods will bring us happiness, as well.

## The CAFO: Concentrated Animal Feed Operation

In 2011, factory farms raised 99.9% of our chickens for meat, 97% of laying hens, 99% of turkeys, 95% of pigs and 78% of cattle sold in the US. Industrial agriculture is one of the biggest contributors to global climate change; CAFOs are a major factor. According to Sierra Club of Michigan, "CAFOs produce huge amounts of animal sewage and other pollutants. CAFO owners and operators spend millions of dollars on technologies that make it possible to produce massive quantities of milk, eggs, and meat, yet they resist investing in technologies and practices to properly treat the wastes that are by-products of this industry ... The sheer amount of wastes produced ... often overwhelms the ability of the land and crops to absorb CAFO wastes."

**Animals raised inhumanely provide meat, milk and eggs that are less nutritious and even harmful.** When cattle graze freely on grass rather than eating grains in CAFOs, the meat has less fat and more heart-healthy nutrients that can reduce heart disease and cancer. Eggs from free-range chickens offer similar benefits. (Beware the term "cage-free." This is not free-range.)

When it comes to milk and cheese, cows who ingest hormones and antibiotics pass these along to the consumer. The growth hormones found in milk are one factor in girls reaching puberty at a younger age. (Others include pesticides in produce, obesity and phthalates in plastics and cosmetics.) CAFO's overuse of antibiotics contributes to the rise of deadly, drug resistant bacteria.

**Livestock animals on CAFOs suffer terribly.** Crammed together by the thousands, shoulder to shoulder, in pens that don't allow them to move, they endure excruciating pain, debilitating illness and absolutely no opportunity to enjoy what was once every animal's birthright: sunshine, fresh air and socializing with others of its kind. Mother animals are not even allowed to instinctively care for their suckling young.

Hormones that increase milk production cause dairy cows to live every day in pain as they are over-engorged with milk. Growth hormones cause chickens to put meat on so rapidly that their bones break because they cannot support their own weight. Until the FDA intervened in 2015, US poultry factories routinely fed their birds arsenic-based drugs to promote weight gain. Because much of our chicken comes from China (and origin labeling is not required), it's difficult to know if it contains arsenic.

**How can you stand for livestock animal rights?** OKT offers these options for reducing the pain, misery, pollution and disease caused by the industrial food system's inhumane treatment of animals.

- **Consider a vegetarian diet.** Another option, the pescatarian diet includes fish (avoid CAFO fish farmed fish). Pregnant women need 80 to 100 grams of protein a day so a vegan diet may not be advisable. OKT does not endorse "lab meats" being developed as we believe these Franken-foods may be shown to be harmful. Check out chef Bryant Terry's cookbook, *Afro-Vegan*.



- **Buy meat, milk, cheese and eggs that have been humanely produced.** Local sources of free-range meat, milk and eggs are your best bet. These products will cost more so eat a little less. Add more fruits and vegetables to your plate – and be healthier for it.

• **Reduce meat consumption.** The food industry has brain-washed us into thinking meat makes the meal. Our bodies do not need large amounts of meat – or meat every day. Eat legumes for protein, e.g. refried beans, hummus, black eyed peas, peanut butter. If possible, ask your mothers and grandmothers how they ate before the '60s and '70s. They most likely have a long list of meatless meals.

- **Use cosmetics labeled "Cruelty Free/Not Tested on Animals."**
- **Join the Food Justice Movement.** Learn about the issues. Get involved with local groups making a difference. Let your commissioners, representatives and senators know how you feel about CAFOs, product testing on animals and other food justice issues. Help OKT build a just and sustainable alternative to the current food system.



OKTjustice.org

media@OKTjustice.org 616-206-3641



Sources: [www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/expert-answers/grass-fed-beef/faq-20058059](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/expert-answers/grass-fed-beef/faq-20058059); [www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ProductSafetyInformation/ucm257540.htm](http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ProductSafetyInformation/ucm257540.htm); [www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ProductSafetyInformation/ucm055436.htm](http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ProductSafetyInformation/ucm055436.htm); [homeguides.sfgate.com/health-benefits-freerange-hens-eggs-79219.html](http://homeguides.sfgate.com/health-benefits-freerange-hens-eggs-79219.html)